

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT

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lung proved satisfactory; that Weyer would then go to the Schwarzwald for a period of convalescence; and that if all went well he would return to his office in mid-December.¹⁾

If no further complications develop, there is every reason to believe Weyer will return to his office some time in December or early January. He is a strong-willed man and undoubtedly will try to carry on, even if it must be at a reduced pace, until the Land elections in mid-1970. No one knows better than Weyer himself that it would create a difficult situation indeed for Minister President Kuehn and the NRW FDP should he have to drop out of active politics entirely. The fact is, however, that, quite aside from the lung infection, Weyer has been in poor health off and on for the past two years. In 1967 he had liver trouble and during the past summer he has suffered acutely from gouty arthritis. For some weeks he suffered such pain that he was unable to get adequate sleep.

It cannot be entirely excluded that Weyer might be forced, for reasons of health, to retire from active politics prior to the 1970 Land elections. If this should transpire, the FDP would have difficulty in selecting a successor to Weyer as NRW party chairman. Minister President Kuehn would have an equally difficult time in choosing a replacement for Interior Minister.

Successor as NRW FDP Land Chairman

Willi Weyer has been Chairman of the NRW FDP for the past twelve years. He has served in the Cabinets of the CDU led governments of Arnold and Meyers as well as in the SPD led governments of Steinhoff and Kuehn. He has ruled the party with a strong hand and has not groomed a successor. As one commentator put it "he is a general who has surrounded himself with non-commissioned officers". There is in his immediate entourage in NRW no one with his experience, political stature, charisma and popularity to replace him. It is generally conceded that neither his Deputy Chairman, Siegfried Zoglmann (age 54), nor Landtag Faction Chairman Walter Moeller (age 62), nor Heinz Lange (54), Deputy Faction Chairman, all of whom represent the older conservative generation, could provide the party with the requisite forceful leadership.

One promising potential candidate is the young 35 year old lawyer and Landtag member Horst Riemer. The latter is a former chairman of the "Jungdemokraten" (FDP youth organization) and protege of Gerhard Kienbaum, former FDP Economic Minister in the CDU/FDP coalition

1) Since drafting the airgram, we have an unconfirmed report that Weyer was released on November 9.

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government of Franz Meyers. He recently came into prominence when, against the wishes of Weyer, he defeated Lange for the second Deputy Chairmanship position at the FDP party convention of March, 1968 in Dortmund. Riemer belongs to the progressive wing of the FDP and comes into conflict therefore with Weyer's more conservative position on such issues as recognition of the Oder-Neisse line, accepting the GDR as a second German state and co-determination. It is doubtful, therefore, that Weyer could give his blessing to Riemer as his successor. Furthermore, he would be considered by many as being too young to be elevated to the top party position. (See our A-239 May 13, 1968 on Riemer.)

Gerhard Kienbaum, who is 48, if he wished to make a fight for it, probably could get the necessary support to succeed Weyer as the party Chairman. (He was elected to the NRW FDP executive board in March, 1968 with the largest number of votes.) However, he has been devoting himself recently almost exclusively to his flourishing private business, a management consulting firm, and is reported to have decided to withdraw from active Land politics in favor of running for a seat in the Bundestag in 1969.

Most observers tend to believe that Weyer would try to persuade his close friend Hans-Dietrich Genscher (41), manager of the FDP Bundestag faction, to return to Dusseldorf to take over the Chairmanship of the FDP party. Should Genscher agree, Riemer might then replace Moeller, who has asked to be relieved for health reasons, as Chairman of the FDP Landtag faction.

Replacing Weyer as Minister of Interior

Minister President Kuehn for his part would face a real dilemma in choosing a suitable replacement for Weyer as Minister of the Interior especially since it is this Minister who normally acts as Deputy Minister President. Aside from Riemer who would undoubtedly be considered too young, there are no discernible qualified FDP candidates. It is generally agreed that Kuehn would feel constrained under the circumstances to select an SPD politician for this post and then carry out a reshuffling of the Cabinet to find a second Cabinet position for the FDP. The FDP holds only two positions in the Kuehn Cabinet - those held by Weyer and Hermann Kohlhase, who is Minister for Housing and Construction.

One can only speculate as to how Kuehn would carry out the reshuffling, but there are a number of ways in which he could do it. He could shift any one of three of his current SPD Ministers (Neuberger in Justice, Figgen in Labor and Social Affairs or Posser in Federal Affairs) to the position of Interior Minister and then select either

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Riemer or Lange from the FDP for another Cabinet position. In the case of Lange, should he choose the latter, he, as the economic expert for the FDP Landtag faction, would fit most logically in the position of Finance Minister. This would probably necessitate moving Neuberger into Interior, Posser into Justice and Wertz, the present Finance Minister, to the position of Minister for Federal Affairs. If Kuehn and the FDP agreed on placing Riemer in the Cabinet, he would presumably have to go into the position of Minister of Justice.

We discussed recently this hypothetical problem with Johannes Rau, Chairman of the SPD Landtag faction. He was of the opinion that Posser could be placed in any of the Cabinet positions including that of Interior. The name of Lange was not mentioned by Rau, but he did consider it possible that Riemer could be brought into the Cabinet, although not in the position of Minister of Interior nor the Minister for Federal Affairs. In this connection, Rau stated that if the SPD wins the 1970 Land elections and continues to head the government, Kuehn had already decided to break up the Ministry for Cultural Affairs into two ministries; one for Education and one for Science. Rau commented that the substantive areas of responsibility coming under the Ministry for Cultural Affairs were too demanding for one man to handle. He said that Professor Mikat in the preceding government of Franz Meyers had been over-burdened in this position, and that the same held true now for Minister Holthoff. Without saying so directly, Rau implied that if Weyer were forced to retire prior to 1970 Minister President Kuehn might consider carrying out at that time the breaking up of the Ministry for Cultural Affairs into two separate ministries which might give him more leeway to find a second Cabinet post for the FDP.

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